The public kick-off of BestMile’s 2-year project “SmartShuttle” was carried out today in the City of Sion. From now on, Sion’s inhabitants and visitors will be able to experience fully autonomous mobility as part of their daily life.

The official inauguration of the “SmartShuttle” project took place in Sion gathering all the partners of the project and the media. Following the event, the two shuttles, which were batptized "Valère" and "Tourbillon", started their first
day of exploitation, driving down the roads they will use for the next 2 years.

For the first time in Switzerland, autonomous shuttles are running in a city center and moving passengers as part of the existing transport system. The two shuttles, created by the French manufacturer Navya are part of the project lead by PostBus and bringing together the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne and BestMile. The project aims to provide essential insights into the reality and the problematic of the integration of autonomous vehicles into urban areas. After successfully completing the first phase of testing, PostBus obtained all the necessary clearances to start the second and most exciting phase: opening the shuttles to the public.

BestMile is providing both the fleet management platform allowing the PostBus to have a real-time overview and remote control over its fleet, and the passengers’ interfaces. As the control tower of an airport, the fleet management platform decide in real-time which mission to send to which vehicle in order to offer the highest quality of service to the passenger in the most efficient way for the operator. In addition, empowered by new generation algorithms developed by EPFL, the platform enables, among others, optimized dispatching and routing, charging management, maintenance planning, and emergency handling.

The passengers are able to follow in real time, on a dedicated phone application and interfaces at the stations, the position of the shuttle, the time remaining before the shuttle’s arrival and any relevant information about the network. BestMile interfaces were specifically rebranded for PostBus. BestMile technology enables the passengers to plan their trip using either pre-defined routes or later on, the on-demand functionality.

The two Navya vehicles perform a loop between "Place du Midi" and the cathedral in a perimeter including both pedestrian and low speed vehicles areas. If this first introduction is conclusive, the implementation on other routes in the city of Sion will be discussed.

The use of the autonomous shuttles is free and opened to the public according to a flexible schedule. In a phase of introduction, the hours of operation are
The first autonomous shuttles in Switzerland are now running during the afternoon, from Tuesday till Sunday. After this phase of implementation, an extension of the hours of operation of the shuttles is planned. Eventually, the goal is to offer transport following a “regular” schedule.

(Press release)